



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MARCH 19 2011

Scripture Story: Genesis 28–33.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, chapters 17 and 18.

struggle by a stream



Photo by Luis Guerra, Jr.

flashlight

“Up to the time of man’s rebellion against the government of God, there had been free communion between God and man. But the sin of Adam and Eve separated earth from heaven, so that man could not have communion with his Maker. Yet the world was not left in solitary hopelessness. The ladder represents Jesus, the appointed medium of communication. Had He not with His own merits bridged the gulf that sin had made, the ministering angels could have held no communion with fallen man. Christ connects man in his weakness and helplessness with the source of infinite power” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 184).

keytext

“I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. . . . I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

(Genesis 28:13-15, NIV)

what do you think?

Rank the following situations in order from the one that makes you feel the worst (number 1) to the one that makes you feel the least upset (number 10).

- ___ Arguing with a parent
- ___ Breaking up with a boyfriend/girlfriend
- ___ Disobeying God
- ___ Flunking a class
- ___ Being rejected for a sports team
- ___ Having a conflict with a teacher
- ___ Failing to spend time with God
- ___ Wasting a whole day just watching TV
- ___ Sleeping through church
- ___ Compromising your standards

Have you ever wrestled with God over one of these issues? What did you sense God trying to say to you? Have you grown as a person through any of these experiences? If so, how?

did you know?

The place where Jacob had his dream of the ladder with angels descending and ascending to heaven was named Bethel (see Genesis 28:19). It means “house of God.” Later, the name was also applied to the nearby city of Luz. Originally, the name applied only to the location where Jacob stood and not to Luz (see Joshua 16:2). In other references in Scripture, however, Bethel is used as the modern name of the ancient city of Luz (see Genesis 35:6; Joshua 18:13; Judges 1:23). Still today it retains the Arabic form of its name, *Beitîn*.

INTO THE STORY

“Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. . . . He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the Lord, and he said: ‘I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. . . . I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.’”

“Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. . . . Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, ‘I’ll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel.’

“Laban said, ‘It’s better that I give her to you than

to some other man. Stay here with me.’ So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel. . . .

“But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah and gave her to Jacob, and Jacob lay with her. . . .

“When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, ‘What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn’t I? Why have you deceived me?’

“Laban replied, ‘It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one. Finish this daughter’s bridal week; then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work.’

“And Jacob did so.”

“So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob’s hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, ‘Let me go, for it is daybreak.’

“But Jacob replied, ‘I will not let you go unless you bless me.’ . . .

“So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, ‘It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.’”

(Genesis 28:10-15; 29:16-28; 32:24-30, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Chart an emotional time line through these stories in Jacob's life. Graph the times when he was emotionally soaring as well as the times when he was in the dumps.

Find a map of the ancient world and trace Jacob's journey through these stories.

List the people in the stories and reflect on each one in terms of their faithfulness to God.

There are four primary stories included in this biblical passage. Write the central lesson to be learned from each story:

1. Jacob's dream of the ladder and angels descending from and ascending to heaven

2. Jacob working for Laban for Leah and Rachel

3. Jacob wrestling with the angel

4. Jacob meeting Esau (see chapter 33.)

What do you think was the primary, overall spiritual lesson that Jacob learned through these experiences?

punch lines

"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him" **(1 John 3:1, NIV).**

"I can do everything through him who gives me strength" **(Philippians 4:13, NIV).**

"Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" **(Romans 5:3-5, NIV).**

"But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me" **(2 Corinthians 12:9, NIV).**

other eyes

"Don't waste your time waiting and longing for large opportunities which may never come. But faithfully handle the little things that are always claiming your attention."—F. B. Meyer, 19th-

20th-century English Baptist minister.

"Only he who can say, 'The Lord is the strength of my life,' can say, 'Of whom shall I be afraid?'"—Alexander Mac-

Laren, 19th-century Scottish preacher.

"If you think you are too small to be effective, you have never been in bed with a mosquito."

—Betty Reese, current U.S. officer and pilot.

Sabbath

Complete the exercise in the *What Do You Think?* section. Why do you think you answered as you did? When you run head-long into moments when you are faced with your sin, how do you respond? Consider the way Paul encourages us to deal with the suffering we experience because of sin: "Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" (Romans 5:3-5, NIV). What part of this passage speaks to you in your wrestling with God? (Underline it.)

Sunday

Read the Bible story of Jacob's wrestling with God in the *Into the Story* section and study the passage using the *Out of the Story* questions. What do you think is the central issue in Jacob's struggle? Why? What do you think is significant about Jacob's testimony at the end of the struggle when he says, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared." If God were trying to give you one message in this story, what would that message be?

Monday

Read the *Key Text* (Genesis 28:13-15) and take some time to imagine God's voice as He is giving this promise, not just to Jacob, but to you. It is God's voice that claims "I am the Lord" and "I am with you" and "I will watch over you." If it were any human making bold promises it might be somewhat suspicious, but God assures Jacob that He will keep His promises. Count on it. Whom do you know who needs to hear this promise from God this week? You can write a note anonymously, or

share in person, or even pray that God will give you the opportunity to offer encouragement to someone whose future is uncertain. Pray today that God will show you the right person with whom to share this promise.

Tuesday

In the *Flashlight* portion you will notice a quote from *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 184. Read this commentary on Jacob's ladder and notice the basic truth it represents. Is there someone in your life who helps you keep the lines of communion open with God? Who encourages you to continue to walk with and talk to the Savior? Let them know this week how they have been a support for you in your relationship with God.

Wednesday

Read through the various passages offered in the *Punch Lines* section and identify whether the Bible verse offers: (1) encouragement, (2) insight, or (3) a challenge. Choose the Bible verse that you think you need the most today and be ready to share it with someone else. There may come a moment today when someone needs a word of encouragement, or insight, or instruction. Pray that the Lord will help you discover which is most needed in your life today as well as by someone else with whom you may come in contact.

Thursday

To really dig into this story more fully, read chapters 17 and 18 of *Patriarchs and Prophets* and find the power-packed statements that jump out at you. For example, Ellen White writes: "Jacob prevailed because he was persevering and determined. His experience testifies to the power of importunate prayer. It is now that we are to learn this lesson of prevailing prayer, of unyielding faith" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 203). God wants us to continue to cling to Him relentlessly! In what way is God challenging you to persevere in prayer? Try to make a brief list of five insights you gained from the reading that you hadn't really thought about before:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Friday

Paul knew what it was like to rest in God's grace when the future was uncertain. Read 2 Corinthians 12:9 and notice the tender, sustaining power of God's grace. Jacob learned through wrestling with the angel and through the drama with his family about the way God interacts and transforms people. What experience in your life resembles most closely the story of Jacob wrestling with God? Why? How have you been transformed by this experience?

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this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets, chapters 17 and 18.

*A special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets* has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.